May 1, 2020
Issue #4

Renaissance Woman
Jeanne Adwani

The Crazy Wisdom Weekly

shining a light in the dark
Published by the *Crazy Wisdom Community Journal* during the Pandemic.

The Crazy Wisdom Weekly

Swimming in the Pandemic

By Bill Zirinsky

The pandemic in April has been easier to bear on sunny days. No big surprise there. Life Before usually included a fair amount of driving around. But since we stick closer to home now, a sunny day means a great walk in the neighborhoods nearby. The dog and I are venturing – slowly – on to streets I've never traversed before, deep into the winding suburban "hollows" of Ann Arbor Hills. And, yesterday, we explored the streets of Pattengill.

A woman I did not know stopped to chat about the beauty of the early spring. We kept our dogs socially distanced. The neighborhoods are alive with all sorts of couplings and families and dogs and bicyclists. I like that about the pandemic.

What I like least about the pandemic is not swimming at the pool. I miss it more and more. Now I'm yearning for it. Thirsty for it. Needing it. Desperate for it. Okay, enough. I miss it. Plenty. I've been swimming through my life since I was 24, and I don't know how to live without it. I guess I'm finding out. It is lousy.

I'm not in my right mind without swimming. Not in my left mind, either. Not crazy. Not wise. Just at a loss about how to think about things. If your entire adult life has been mediated through the act, the pleasure, the release, the stretching, the vestibular motion, the fluid thoughts, of swimming – well, then, how do you get on without it?

Six more months of this and I could unravel my life. Maybe that would be a good thing? Then again, I am pining for salvation, getting to the ocean this summer. I will have to travel across the George Washington Bridge, and through Manhattan and Queens, to get there. But I will get there. Or die on the vine.

I like that Dairy Queen and Kilwin's are open for ice cream. I like texting my pals Linda and Cecille and Tom, from a few houses away, and seeing if they want to come to their front porches and have a socially distant "visit" with me on the sidewalk. It is a unique time in our lives, unlike anything we have known. The fright and illness and economic loss are real. But there is also much to notice and savor. I love that there is almost nowhere to go, except outside for a stroll. I could do this for a year, maybe, but I would need the pool.

Ruth Schekter and Bill Zirinsky have been the owners of Crazy Wisdom for 31 years. Bill is also the Editorial Director and Publisher of the Crazy Wisdom Community Journal.

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Leslie Science & Nature Center

The Leslie Science and Nature Center is offering free online education programs twice daily for members, as well as a program free and open to the public every Friday. Online resources for teachers and parents are also available. You can find more ideas for activities on their Facebook page.

Find the online education programs here.

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Dan Saferstein
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Bill Zirinsky

Word of the Week:

Somniloquy

Uttering speech while asleep

Because of Covid-19, we didn't publish our usual springtime *Crazy Wisdom Community Community Journal* in mid-April. (We will publish it later on in the spring.) But in the meantime, we thought we'd create a weekly online version—short, and lively, and perhaps a mild distraction for our local and regional readership. We welcome articles, interviews, recipes, wisdom, personal essays, breathing exercises, favorite places for socially distant walks, news of your dogs, whatever. Send your submission to Jennifer@crazywisdom.net.

MONEY PEACE

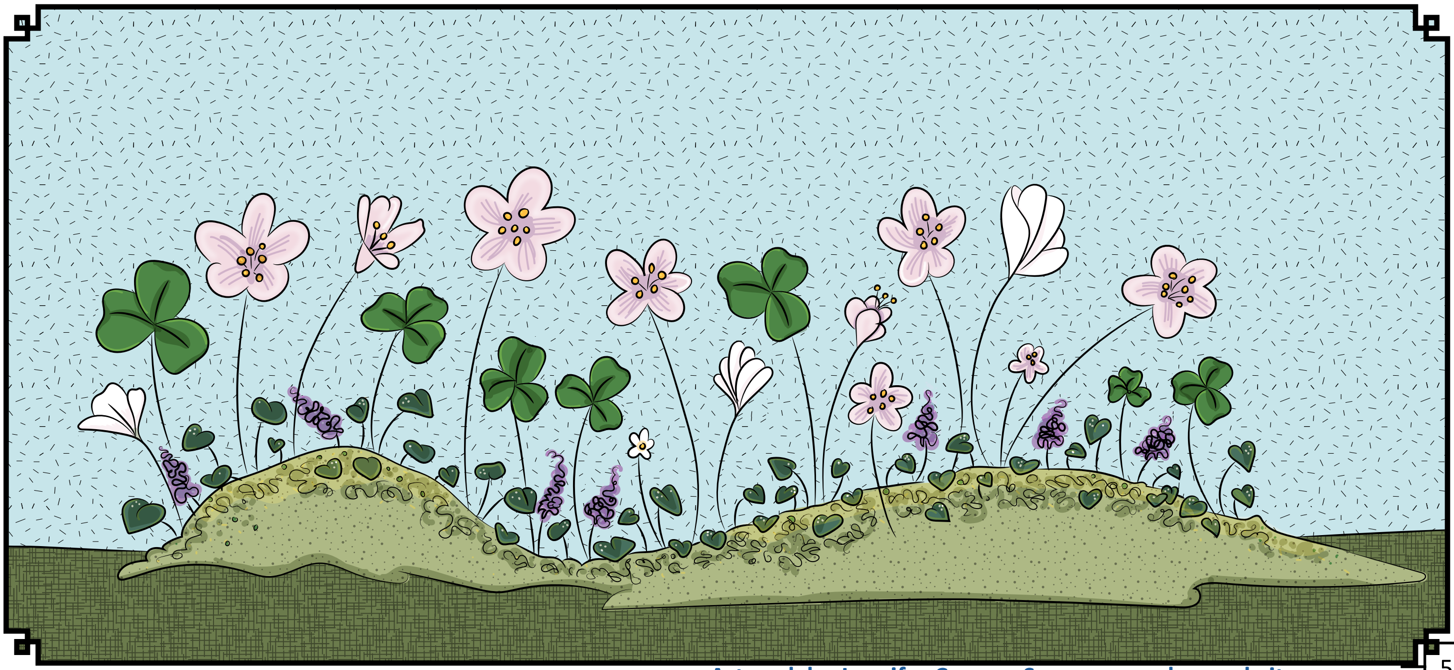
By Dan Saferstein

I remember years ago I heard Mike Ditka say in an interview that money wasn't his God. Although I don't typically turn to former NFL football coaches for spiritual wisdom, his words resonated with me and I thought that I didn't want money to ever become my God either. I knew I was at risk for being a money worshipper, since I was raised to believe that financial security was the foundation for all security. I don't blame my parents for raising me with these values. They both grew up very poor and didn't want me to ever experience the same poverty that they did. It probably never occurred to them that the fear of poverty could create a poverty of its own. All fear creates some kind of poverty. Whenever you worry about the future, you give up the wealth of the present moment.

Long before I became a psychologist, I worked at country clubs and learned that having a lot of money didn't necessarily mean you worried less about it. I caddied for one member who would take out his wallet three or four times a round and count his money. This was before Apple Pay and Venmo when guys had wallets as thick as corned beef sandwiches. He would sometimes ask me to guess how much money he had in his wallet. He thought this was a fun game—but it really wasn't, especially since I knew he was the worst tipper in the club.

It takes a tremendous amount of courage to calmly face financial challenges during this pandemic crisis. It always takes more courage during times of uncertainty. But the good news is that all the courage you need is inside you, even if it might happen to be buried beneath some kind of financial shame. Believe me, now is not a time to make money out to be a character issue. Now is a time to think of money as just money. That would be Lao Tzu's approach if he were alive during this pandemic period. In case you're not familiar with his work, Lao Tzu was a Chinese poet and philosopher who was blogging about life long before there were any blogs. Thousands of years ago he wrote: Be content with what you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you. And that is better than anything that I'll probably ever write in a blog.

Dan Safferstein is a Licensed Psychologist with a specialty in sport psychology, working with children, adults, coaches, and teams. You can learn more about Dr. Safferstein, and read more of his resilience blogs on his website.



Artwork by Jennifer Carson. See more on her website.

5 QUESTIONS FOR Eve Wilson

1. When did you realize that you were a storyteller?

This is so funny; I had forgotten about it – When I was ten years old I wrote a story for a class assignment. My teacher liked it so much she had me read it to the class and then two other classes (which I recall as being terrifying, but no one made fun of me, so it must have been okay).

In my teens I became a songwriter and later, a performer of my songs with guitar and lap dulcimer–that is a type of storytelling.

2. What is it that you love about books/stories?

I love that in stories, much which is true can be imparted on many levels at once. I love that stories can help people to heal and grow in ways that might not happen via a simple linear or intellectual communication. I love the way books connect us to other people and help us to understand their cultures and deeper natures. A good story helps us develop compassion for ourselves and others. Stories and books give us perspective on life.

3. What inspired you to write *Riding the Wave of Change*?

Riding the Wave of Change–Hope, Healing, and Spiritual Growth for Our World was a book I had to write. The perspective and understanding I have gained through my healing work, about why people and our world are as they are, and the changes that I saw coming at that time needed to be shared. Now, here we are in the midst of those changes big time, and I am grateful *Riding the Wave* is in place to provide a foundation for understanding and embracing our journey of ascension.

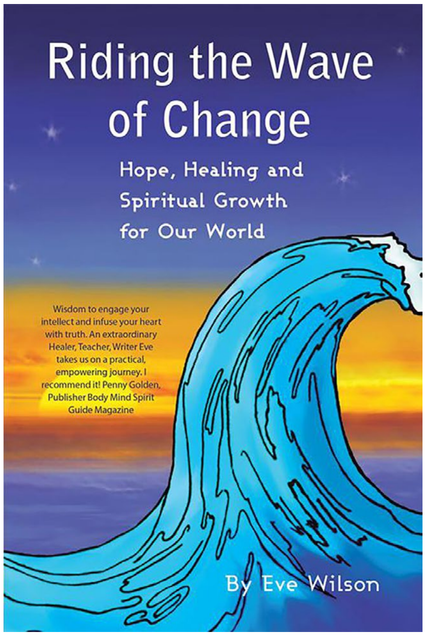
4. What was one of the most surprising things you learned while writing this book?

I learned a new way of writing. I discovered I could bring together my storytelling gifts with my teaching skills to make the complex information I wanted to share easier to assimilate and a pleasure to read. Rather than just sharing facts, I shared the experiences that brought the information to me–as memories, case histories, visions, dreams, and through original art. I really loved doing that, it gave my book color and dimension and made it fun for me. Penny Golden, Publisher of *Body Mind Spirit Guide* where I am published monthly, told me it was my best writing yet, that it reads like a song.

5. As a child, what did you dream of becoming when you grew up?

I began working as a healer in my teens at about the time I began writing songs. Helping people love themselves, their lives, and our world was all I ever wanted to do. I was fortunate, in that through helping others I helped myself too. Through healing myself I became a better healer for others, and so the cycle continues to this day.

Eve Wilson is a UCM Master Healer. Visit www.spiritualhealers.com to discover her books, blog, classes, articles about healing & ascension, or to schedule a healing treatment for people or pets.



Click here to purchase *Riding the Wave of Change–Hope, Healing, and Spiritual Growth for Our World* from our online store.

Virtual Meaningful Mondays

SevaLight Retreat Centre for Self-Realization, Pure Meditation, Healing and Counselling in Bath, Michigan, a 501(C)(3) nonprofit serving since 2003, continues to offer appointments for pure spiritual healing, intuitive counseling, and coaching, and Pure Meditative peace and other stress-relieving classes by phone or video conference, as we have done for years for those living in other areas of the world.

Payments can be arranged on a sliding scale, so your financial situation will not prevent you from receiving help. We send love and light and winged prayer for healing every day at 9 p.m.

Virtual Meaningful Mondays began on April 27, 2020 for all faiths, meditation practices, and traditions. We warmly welcome you to gather with us on video conference at 7:45 p.m. with the program to start at 8 p.m. We will share in song/chants and inspiring readings from the writings of Mata Yogananda Mahasaya Dharmaji, followed by Pure Meditation and silent prayer for as little or as long as you wish. RSVP via email by 10 a.m. any Monday to receive a link to the video gathering at no charge.

For more information, call 517-641-6201, email Info@SelfRealizationCentreMichigan.org, or visit SelfRealizationCentreMichigan.org.

Crazy Wisdom Book Pick of the Week

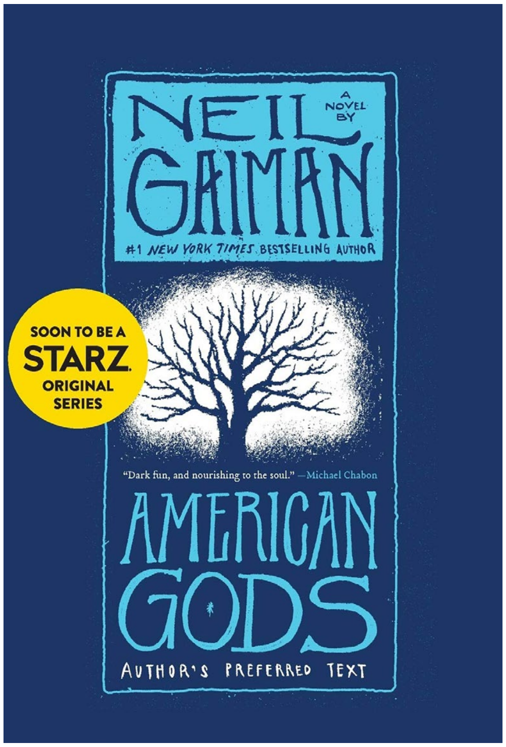
This week's book pick of the week is from Crazy Wisdom staff member, Arden Lis.

American Gods by Neil Gaiman

Urban fantasy meets religious existentialism, this book is one that I keep coming back to over and over again. The way Gaiman captures the way that gods are viewed in the US, as well as how the idea of the "mixing pot" that is this country almost forces immigrants to abandon their old world views and adopt a new, American lease on life, is stunning. Which side will you choose: the Old gods or the New?

You can purchase this book through Crazy Wisdom's online shop.

Click here to purchase a copy of American Gods.



Yoga Pose of the Week

Extended Triangle Pose- Utthita Trikonasana

By Michele Bond of Yoga House Ann Arbor

Triangle pose is a powerful pose for these times. Triangles represent strength and resilience, as well as the peace and power that come from the union of mind, body, and spirit. When pointing upward a triangle is masculine in essence, symbolizing stability and power, fire, and even an ascent to the heavens. The downward facing triangle represents the feminine energy, earth and water, the great mother, and grace. Both upward and downward facing triangles are found in Trikonasana, which remind us to stay strong and stable, but also creative and fluid in our body/mind to adapt to a new way of being in these changing times. This pose teaches us to find the perfect balance between stability and grace, that place in the middle, the gateway to the heart.

To practice, step feet three and a half to four feet apart and extend arms to the side. Turn right foot outward 90 degrees and left foot slightly inward, aligning heels with each other. Fold sideways at the hip joint, torso aligned with right thigh, reaching your left hand to the sky and right hand to your ankle, shin, or the earth. Keep the right thigh rotating outward and spine long. Inhale and ground your left heel as you reach your right hand to the sky to come up. Repeat for the other side.

Triangle pose strengthens the legs. It stretches the hips, legs, groins, shoulders, chest, and spine. It stimulates the abdominal organs and improves digestion. Triangle pose can help with menopausal symptoms, and relieve backache. It is therapeutic for anxiety, flat feet, neck pain, osteoporosis, and sciatica, and helps to relieve stress. Yoga postures and breath are some of our best remedies in times of stress. Allowing longer exhalations is one more way to help us to feel more at peace.

From Our Blog

Forest Therapy- Embracing Nature, Connecting with Others

By Beth Solberg

On the night before winter solstice in 2017, I was part of a small group that set out at dusk from the parking lot at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, carrying paper globes as we entered the adjacent woods on a footpath. Our guide, Ann Arbor artist and art teacher Cayla Samano, had distributed the lanterns beforehand. As darkness came down around us, the light-sensitive globes turned on, bright white orbs in the shadowy woods. Ice and snow crunched underfoot. We took our time, Cayla reminding us not to rush, asking us to slow our pace.

When we reached a gazebo in the woods, she paused to check if everyone was warm enough and gave us our first "invitations" – carefully chosen prompts offered by the guide to help awaken the participants' senses. She began with hearing, first asking us to close our eyes: what was the most distant sound we could detect? The closest? After each question there was a long pause in which to see what our senses would turn up. Before asking us to open our eyes she said, "Imagine, as you open your eyes, that this is the first time you've seen the earth. What is it like to see for the first time?"

Following these first invitations, Cayla bent to pick up a twig from the path. She invited the group to share their reflections on this first round of exercises, a practice called "council," handing the first volunteer the twig as a speaking piece. After he spoke, he passed the piece onto the next person, and this continued until everyone who had wanted to share had spoken. The walk continued, and we had about two more rounds of invitations before returning the rather short distance to the Botanical Gardens. Invitations made use of the natural surroundings, including Fleming Creek, which beautifully traverses the woods. After each council, turning my senses again to the surrounding forest put me in a different headspace – it seemed that there was abundant time, as if my attention could be fully absorbed merely by what was around me in the woods. It brought me a deep sense of calm. For the final invitation, Cayla commented that although the winter woods may seem dead, in fact they are dormant, like fields left temporarily unplanted by a farmer. Before sending us to find an opportune place in the woods to meditate for a few minutes, she asked us to reflect on what it might be like to be fallow ourselves, to not expect ourselves to always be productive.

Read more about Samano's forest therapy programs on our blog.

The Crazy Wisdom staff has missed seeing and interacting with many of you during our period of quarantine and we wondered what you were up to—so we asked!!

Jeanne Adwani is a 'Hair Healer' in Ypsilanti at *Be Hair Now*. She is also a poet, an artist, a creativity coach, and Priestess.

You closed your business temporarily on March 19th. How are you filling your days?

I've been doing a lot of writing mostly poetry. I have a writers group and we meet weekly on Zoom. I have a poetry blog, geezergirl.org, where you can visit and read. I am a priestess in The 13 Moon Mystery School. I gather and serve this practice and our Temple daily. I have been Zoom zoomin' with family and friends. Walking my dog. Appreciating the spring unfolding. There is beauty in the stillness and calm. Mama Gaia certainly is responding well to our slow down.

When you find yourself feeling blue and isolated from friends and everyday chit chat with customers, what do you do to feel better?

I stay connected with my people, my family regularly. I check in with them and support those that may find all this way harder than I do. A good fresh shower clears my brain and it feels like it rejuvenates me. Also, sitting in silence and having a deep heart listening.

What daily habit have you changed that you'd like to keep when this period of quarantine is over?

Writing feels important to keeping a regular practice again. And, I feel that I really wish to honor the earth with more care and definition. I do not want to ever take Her for granted. It is my duty and honor to serve this planet, to live *with* the Earth, mama Gaia, not on her.

When this period is over, what is the first thing you want to do that you haven't been able to do?

I swear, I am going to hug the bejesus out of the first person that lets me, and hug all my beloveds as soon as I can.

What one guilty pleasure have you indulged in while in quarantine?

ONE? Hahaah. Well, a variety of crunchy, salty snacks. They will be removed from my presence as soon as this is shifted. And Netflix. Oh..binging.

Adwani is also a contributing writer in Sacred Body Wisdom. Check it out at shopcrazywisdom.com.

Veterinary Care Goes Online

By Monica Turenne

Life here at Four Paws has been a bit different these days, but we are adjusting and finding ways to continue to help you and your beloved pets.

On March 17, Kelli (my amazing veterinary nurse) and I saw our regular number of house-call appointments. We were doing all we could to keep ourselves and our clients safe—wearing masks and gloves. As the day progressed, we were listening to the news and trying to process everything coming in. It was a whirlwind and incredibly frightening.

We decided after that day that we could not continue to see our patients in their homes as there was no way for us to be as safe as we wanted and it was impossible to maintain a safe distance. It was not long after this that Governor Whitmer gave the Executive Order to "Stay Home, Stay Safe."

Since then, we have continued to see patients via virtual/telemedicine. This has been incredibly helpful and has allowed our clients to avoid taking their pets to the emergency hospital. We have also continued to refill medications and supplements to keep our patients healthy.

We have also met some new friends as we are now able to see new patients virtually and prescribe medications and supplements. We have helped patients from all over Michigan and it has been such a pleasure to meet their pet parents and help them. We are able to help with most non-urgent medical issues as well as prescribe any medications, herbs, or supplements that would help in your pet's situation.

We so miss seeing our clients and patients, but appreciate the technology which has allowed us to keep in touch and meet wonderful new friends.

We look forward to the day we can resume our normal house-call appointments! Please stay safe and know that we are here to help!

Warmly,
Monica, Kelli, Giuliana and Annie

If you need pet care, please visit Four Paws Vet Wellness online for more information.

COMFORT FOOD

Crispy Tofu Steaks with Ginger Vinaigrette

By Angelas Madaras

Ingredients Needed

- 3 tablespoons minced peeled fresh ginger
- 3 tablespoons minced scallion
- 1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
- 2/3 cup canola oil
- Kosher salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup panko crumbs or tempura flour
- One 14-ounce package firm tofu, drained and sliced 1" thick

In a small bowl, mix the ginger with the scallion, vinegar, and 1/3 cup of the oil; season the vinaigrette with salt.

Beat the egg in a medium bowl. Spread the panko on a plate. Dip the tofu slices in the egg, then coat in the panko. In a large nonstick skillet, heat the remaining 1/3 cup of oil. Fry the tofu over moderate heat, turning, until golden and crispy, about eight minutes. Season with salt and serve with the ginger vinaigrette.

Makes four servings.

Local Music Online Concerts!

For more than 40 years, Dan Hazlett has performed and toured throughout the Midwest. He was a songwriting instructor at the Internationally renowned Interlochen Center for the Arts for six years, teaching gifted high school songwriters from around the world. His songs have been recorded by such luminaries as jazz great Kimmie Horne and country music star Bob Marshall.

His nine previously released CDs have received airplay throughout the United States as well as internationally. Dan achieved recognition for his songs as a winner in events such as the Great Lakes Songwriting Contest, Big Top Chautauqua Songwriting Contest, KRCL/Founders Title Folk and Bluegrass Festival, the Billboard Songwriting Competition, and has been nominated multiple times for Detroit Music Awards.

As an educator, Dan has been featured on the staff at the prestigious Interlochen Center for the Arts, Lamb's Retreat for Songwriters, the Madison Songwriters Guild Retreat, the Alcona County Artists Retreat and the Wheatland Music Festival. He has been a guest on the syndicated radio programs River City Folk and the Mitch Album show, and had a song featured on Car Talk. He hosted his own folk radio show, Local Folks, at WXOU-FM for seven years. As a playwright, Dan authored and toured with the musical comedy "Tumbledown Town and is the co-author of a new musical entitled "Calling Winston."

You can visit Hazlett online at danhazlett.com.

Listen and watch Dan perform online every Thursday at 3 p.m. EST on his facebook page.

When the Plot Twists

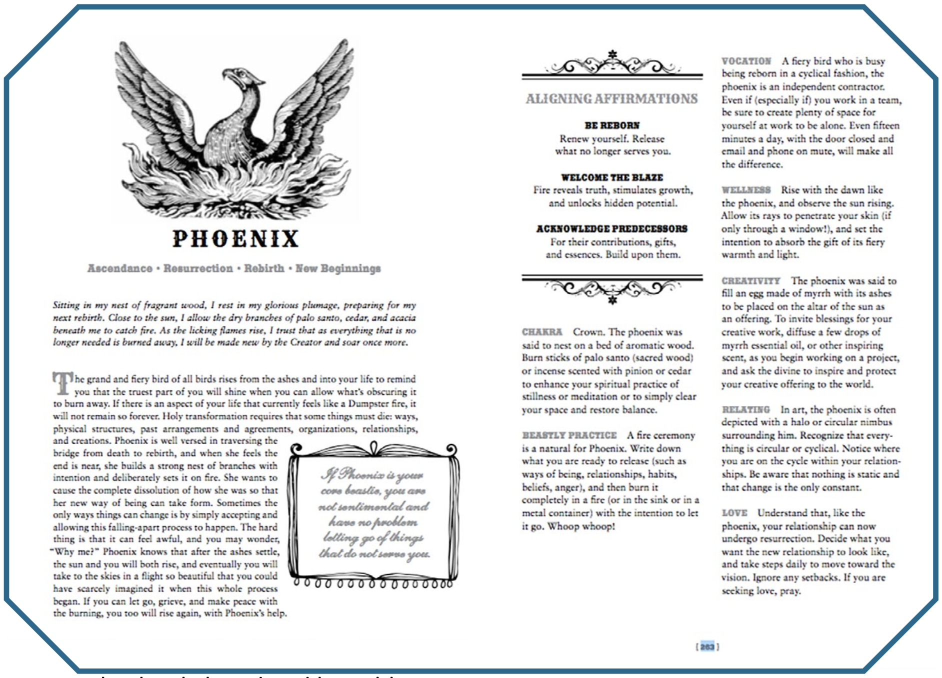
Turning to Wild Animal Wisdom for Guidance in Uncertain Times

By Sarah Bamford Seidelmann

We were so lucky to host Sarah Sidelmann last year for a Beasties book signing and weekend workshop. We thank her for provding us with this fun article and encourage you to seek out your own beasties!

An eagle flew so closely over my car windshield that I reflexively ducked as I drove toward our local animal shelter with my kids in the backseat. The eagle's brief visit felt like a blessing on our decision to adopt a second dog. I knew in my heart, finally, that we were doing the right thing.

A spider had built a huge web in our front doorway. It was the first thing I saw that morning and I knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that I couldn't afford to avoid writing one more day. I got the coffee started and grabbed my laptop. Determined to do the rewrites I'd been avoiding.



PHOENIX

Ascendance • Resurrection • Rebirth • New Beginnings

Sitting in my nest of fragrant wood, I rest in my glorious plumage, preparing for my next rebirth. Close to the sun, I allow the dry branches of palo santo, cedar, and acacia beneath me to catch fire. As the licking flames rise, I trust that as everything that is no longer needed is burned away, I will be made new by the Creator and soar once more.

The grand and fiery bird of all birds rises from the ashes and into your life to remind you that the truest part of you will shine when you can allow what's obscuring it to burn away. If there is an aspect of your life that currently feels like a Dumpster fire, it will not remain so forever. Holy transformation requires that some things must die: ways, physical structures, past arrangements and agreements, organizations, relationships, and creations. Phoenix is well versed in traversing the bridge from death to rebirth, and when she feels the end is near, she builds a strong nest of branches with intention and deliberately sets it on fire. She wants to cause the complete dissolution of how she was so that her new way of being can take form. Sometimes the only ways things can change is by simply accepting and allowing this falling-apart process to happen. The hard thing is that it can feel awful, and you may wonder, "Why me?" Phoenix knows that after the ashes settle, the sun and you will both rise, and eventually you will take to the skies in a flight so beautiful that you could have scarcely imagined it when this whole process began. If you can let go, grieve, and make peace with the burning, you too will rise again, with Phoenix's help.

If Phoenix is your core beastie, you are not sentimental and have no problem letting go of things that do not serve you.

ALIGNING AFFIRMATIONS

BE REBORN
Renew yourself. Release what no longer serves you.

WELCOME THE BLAZE
Fire reveals truth, stimulates growth, and unlocks hidden potential.

ACKNOWLEDGE PREDECESSORS
For their contributions, gifts, and essences. Build upon them.

CHAKRA Crown. The phoenix was said to nest on a bed of aromatic wood. Burn sticks of palo santo (sacred wood) or incense scented with pinion or cedar to enhance your spiritual practice of stillness or meditation or to simply clear your space and restore balance.

BEASTLY PRACTICE A fire ceremony is a natural for Phoenix. Write down what you are ready to release (such as ways of being, relationships, habits, beliefs, anger), and then burn it completely in a fire (or in the sink or in a metal container) with the intention to let it go. Whoop whoop!

VOCATION A fiery bird who is busy being reborn in a cyclical fashion, the phoenix is an independent contractor. Even if (especially if) you work in a team, be sure to create plenty of space for yourself at work to be alone. Even fifteen minutes a day, with the door closed and email and phone on mute, will make all the difference.

WELLNESS Rise with the dawn like the phoenix, and observe the sun rising. Allow its rays to penetrate your skin (if only through a window!), and set the intention to absorb the gift of its fiery warmth and light.

CREATIVITY The phoenix was said to fill an egg made of myrrh with its ashes to be placed on the altar of the sun as an offering. To invite blessings for your creative work, diffuse a few drops of myrrh essential oil, or other inspiring scent, as you begin working on a project, and ask the divine to inspire and protect your creative offering to the world.

RELATING In art, the phoenix is often depicted with a halo or circular nimbus surrounding him. Recognize that everything is circular or cyclical. Notice where you are on the cycle within your relationships. Be aware that nothing is static and that change is the only constant.

LOVE Understand that, like the phoenix, your relationship can now undergo resurrection. Decide what you want the new relationship to look like, and take steps daily to move toward the vision. Ignore any setbacks. If you are seeking love, pray.

[263]

I awoke in my hotel bed feeling lonely, scared, and lost. Next, I opened my eyes to "see" a fire sprinkler on the ceiling that was remarkably elephant shaped and I remembered, instantly, that I was absolutely loved and loveable. Happy tears came and I immediately shifted from self-pity into wonder.

I'm a shamanic healer, so reading the signs and symbols all around me (and helping my clients to do the same for themselves) is what I do for a living. Maybe my stories sound a little ridiculous, or maybe, you too have had the strange and wondrous experience of receiving an extremely helpful message from a wild animal?

Uncertainty is something that, as humans, we must wrestle with. And when things get extremely uncertain, we desperately want (and need) good guidance. We shake our hands at the sky (or beg our therapist, BFF, or life coach) "Tell me how this [insert problem or drama/situation] is going to end?" Or "What "should" I do? So that things go well?"

And sometimes, if we query enough people, we may get some answers…but how can we be sure they are the right ones for us?

A decade or so ago, I was faced with a desperate patch of this kind of uncertainty. My medical practice which had fit me to a tee suddenly felt like a super itchy wool body suit (with a snap crotch) that was six sizes too small. This horrible plot twist foiled my former certainty (I'll live comfortably doing a job I'm proud of and retire at seventy-five!) and put a serious cramp in my joy.

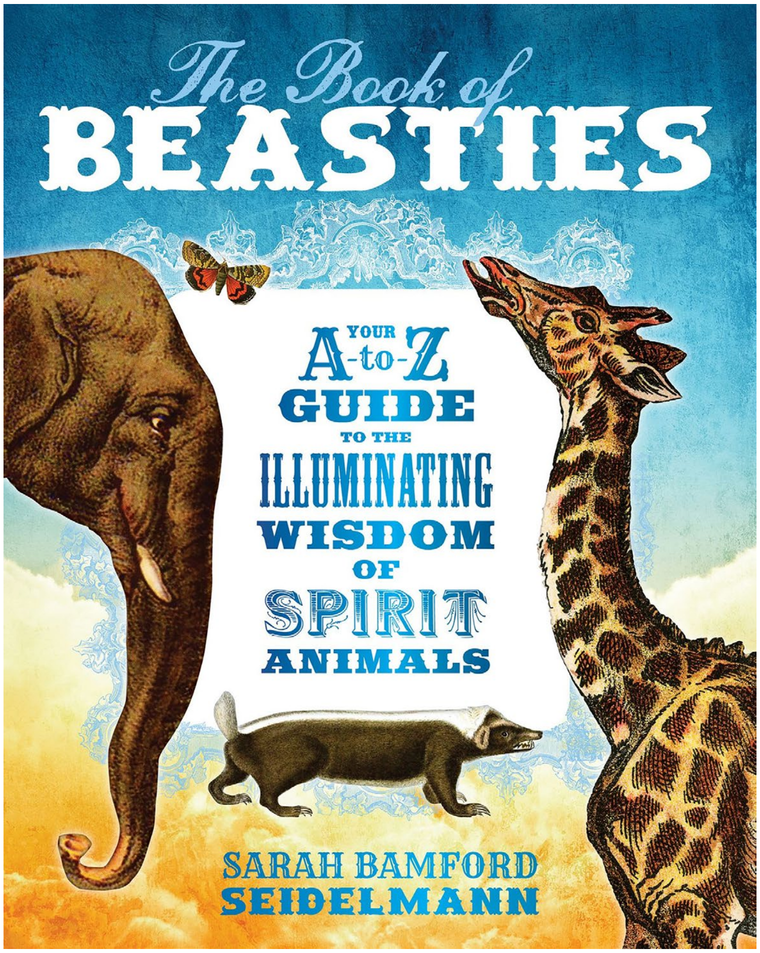
I was in a sheer panic. I couldn't dare quit…and throw away twenty years of training/experience? But, I was miserable. So, I hit pause on my career and took what I now fondly refer to as my "radical sabbatical" from medicine. That summer my uncertainty level was at "Spinal Tap level eleven" …absolutely unbearable. My undies were in such a bundle worrying about the future "what-ifs" that I couldn't even enjoy the first summer I'd had off in over twenty years.

That's when the wild animals came calling. I stumbled into this ancient shamanic idea that the creatures that cross your path have wisdom to share with you. If you paid attention, they would teach you things. "Come on!" I scoffed darkly…that's crazy? I was about as linear and logical as they come.

Desperation bordering on madness, however, will force you to do strange things. Without telling a soul (lest they think me unstable), I decided to experiment with this surreal suggestion.

If the wild beasts were so smart, maybe they could toss me a wisdom bone and help me figure out how to write a book. During my radical sabbatical I had suddenly been abducted by this crazy idea that I needed to write a book and I had no idea how to write a book, never mind what the book was even about.

So, I took to my neighborhood sidewalk and even briefly entered the woods nearby. My experiment was extremely disappointing. No muskrats sauntered by me, no timid hares leaped, and no birds of any distinction sang any songs. I returned home defeated. The only "creatures" I had seen, if you could call them that, was a group of ants I saw fleeing across the sidewalk carrying tiny grains of sand. "Great…just my luck! Ants." They seemed so extremely insignificant and unhelpful.



I wrote broodingly into my diary about the meaninglessness of ants. Then, it hit me. Ants build these huge castles of sand. And they don't do it alone. And they don't do it overnight….

Wait. Maybe the ants were there to help me after all? I asked myself, "How could I approach this book project as an ant would?" That afternoon, I opened a file and wrote a few notes about what the book title was and what I might want to cover in the book and closed it again. That was my attempt to (metaphorically) move one grain of sand across the sidewalk.

Was it divinity coming through the ants as indigenous societies believed? Was it a case of simple inspiration by biology? At first, I wasn't sure. But, because it was helping, I kept going.

After the ants, I started listening very closely to every single beastie that showed up. Though some days, I could scarcely keep up. The more I paid attention, the more animals that came. And I recorded their advice (or what I intuited it was) in my journal. I didn't stop and less than a year later I self-published my first book which (eventually) led to a book advance and a literary agent.

With time, I learned that each and every beastie had amazing wisdom to share, if only I would listen. I am now noticing a powerful resurgence of beasties appearing in my life now to guide me. I think it's because everything has become so much more uncertain again. For, all of us. In this Pandemic it's as if, collectively, we are all stepping into the dark forest, unsure of what lies ahead.

In traditional shamanic societies, when things get extremely uncertain, they always listen to the wild creatures because they trust in their wisdom.

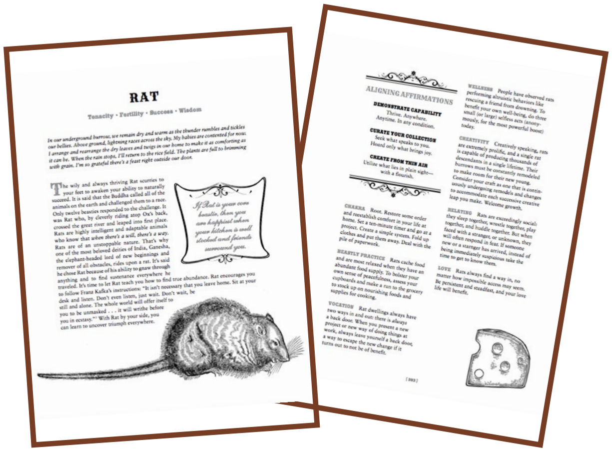
Whether you're uncertain of the role you want to play in this Universe moving forward or you aren't sure how you're going to make it through another day of ZOOM work calls with your Grandma's barking chihuahua in the same room, I invite you to open up to the wisdom of the beasties. What they have to share with you just might help you relax just a little bit.

Please find two beasties (Rat and Phoenix) I have chosen to share from my book, *The Book of Beasties: Your A-Z Guide to the Illuminating Wisdom of Spirit Animals*.

Read the one you are most drawn to or read them both. Take what you like and leave the rest. May we all find our way again, together!

Visit Sarah Bamford Seidelmann online on Facebook or follow her on Instagram.

Add a copy of Sarah's book to your collection from shopcrazywisdom.com.



Unreachable

by Kathleen Ivanoff

This is my quest, to follow that star
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far.
–Lyric from *The Impossible Dream*

And didn't I collapse like an imploding red dwarf
Over and over again and still it does not end
And haven't I still burned up repeatedly like a capsule untethered in space
All out of breath, the room tumbles through time.
Looking out a window shaped like a zero
Calling my own name, the questions are blinking and nodding, a cipher of uncertainty.

And with my hands on the cool glass I say I cannot feel you anymore
Please don't forget me

And the answer is the moon rising inside my chest.
And the time that praying mantis landed on the hood of my car as I drove east on the freeway.
And when the dogs I have buried in the backyard come to visit my new dog and I watch them play.

Still the wind is messing with me – blowing away lists called 'to do" and 'today', growling around the fence plastered with wild garbage, flying away as I stoop to grab, stoop to grab, and I miss, I miss, I miss.

I have a smoking jacket made out of real smoke.
I often put it on over my parka when I go for a walk.
I've stuffed it into the back of a closet for years, hoping I would forget it was there.
I've tried to donate it to Good Will.
I wonder if it makes me seem un-liberatable to the Buddhas?
I have another past time: to make the smoking jacket into a scape-coat.
My Nirmanakaya frenemy, I like to blame it for my lack of progress.

I've made mistakes it seems, on a stage for an audience of millions.
But when a small miracle unfolds, it is always a private event.
I hold the moment as gently as I can, because I know as soon as I am
noticing, it is already gone, and all I have left is I want to tell someone
it was just like a dream – some impossible dream.

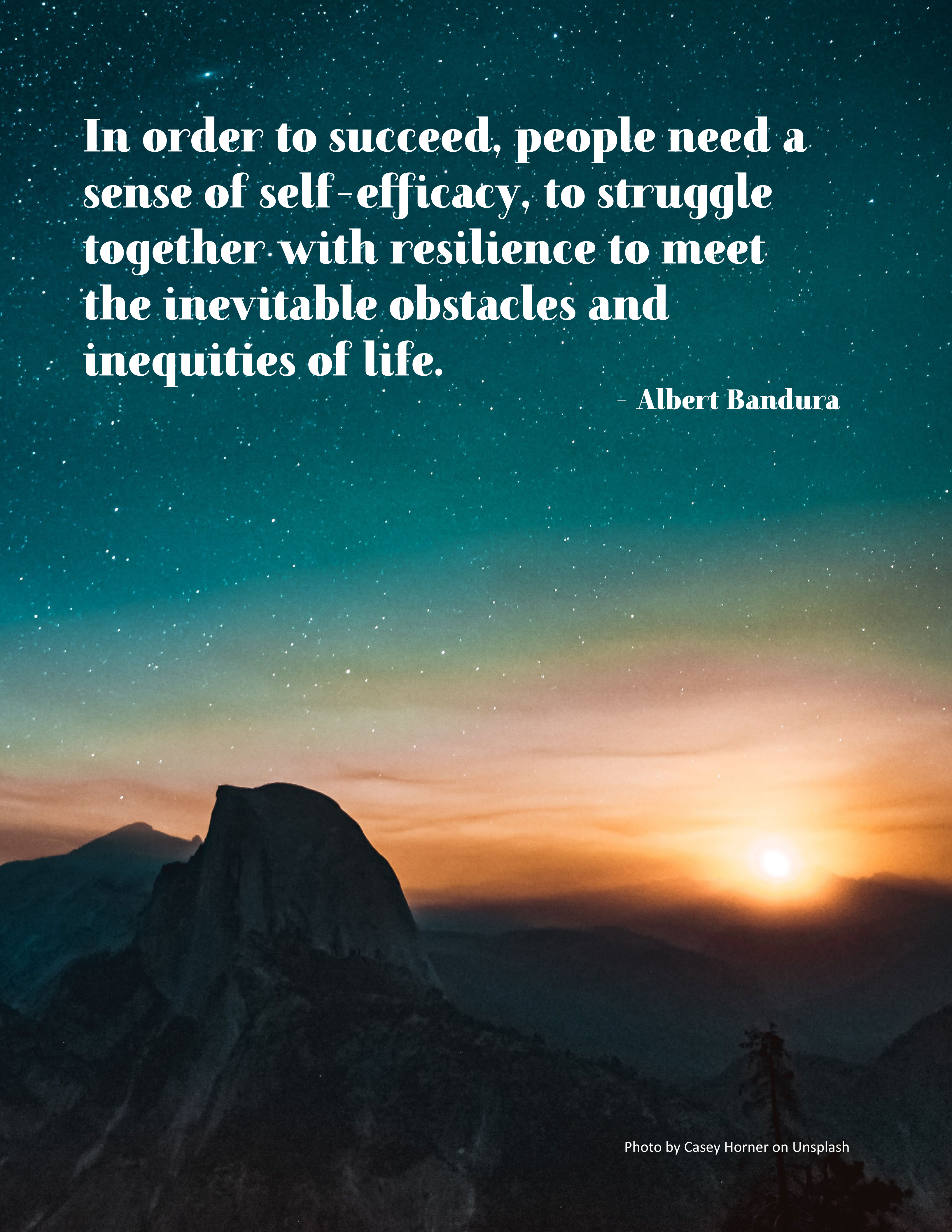
And I think I've sometimes made liberation into a finish line ribbon where I raise my arms and cross over and the oval track that I have been endlessly running on is a sudden Eden.
I bend over panting and blowing, the enlightenment chemicals coursing through my whole nervous system so that I have now won a permanent runner's high and my liberated blood pulses: now won now won now one.

There are stories of the victorious: they sat in caves for years, they unchained links, they didn't prefer pleasure, (or they did, but they didn't mind that it was only just another object in space). They didn't give up, they didn't do everything right, they kept including all of us.

Maybe liberation is the end of "what's next"?
Where is the last place you looked?
A hide is a name for your own skin too.

Kathleen Ivanoff is a former program director for Jewel Heart Tibetan Buddhist Center. She worked closely with Gelek Rimpoche to establish the teaching curriculum, and taught various courses in Buddhist meditation.

Photo by Pono Lopez on Unsplash


In order to succeed, people need a sense of self-efficacy, to struggle together with resilience to meet the inevitable obstacles and inequities of life.
- Albert Bandura
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